

Aspira, Inc. of New Jersey

Annual Report

**July 1, 1985 to
June 30, 1986**



Message from the Executive Director

As I look back at 1985, I am pleased to announce that, Aspira had a very successful year though at times it was very trying. During 1985, Aspira lived up to the philosophy which it instills in its youth of embracing a challenge with a positive attitude and perseverance.

Aspira's first challenge was the loss of Federal funds in June 1985 for Aspira's Talent Search Program in Passaic County. Aspira was determined not to close a Center which had been such an essential resource to the disadvantaged youth of that community for more than 14 years. Equipped with an outstanding record of college placement and educational services in the Passaic County community, Aspira proceeded to rally support. Today I am pleased to report that the Aspira Center is operating at full force for the 1985-86 year with alternative funding. I would like to give special thanks to some people who believed in us and came to our assistance: Governor Thomas A. Kean, Councilwoman Maria Magda, Mayor Joseph Lipari, Mayor Frank Graves, and the City Council members of Paterson and Passaic. To all the supporters who stood by us throughout these difficult months, "un million de gracias".

As a voice which has long advocated for quality education and access, Aspira is once again taking a major role in moving this agenda with the policy makers and administrators at the state level. Aspira collaborated with the Department of Higher Education to

implement a symposium addressing the decline in minority student enrollment in the colleges and universities in the state. This symposium was attended by representatives in the higher education community who looked at the issues that must be addressed to reverse the present situation. This was a first step in a process that must be followed by a commitment of resources by the Department of Higher Education, as well as by a plan for accountability.

An integral link that contributes to the under representation of Hispanic students (especially Puerto Ricans) in colleges is the devastating drop-out rate among Hispanic high school students.

Although Aspira has maintained a 90% success rate with its prevention and intervention programs at the junior and senior high school level, we realize that it will take all segments of the community to combat this problem. In September, Aspira will undertake a two year study in Newark to determine the characteristics of the families, students and institutions in the community that foster or prevent attrition. Once an analysis of these findings is made, Aspira will present various alternatives that might be adopted to combat this very critical problem. We thank the Newark Board of Education for its cooperation in this endeavor.

In Leadership Development our agenda is to continue to provide training and experiential opportunities, to prepare our students to be citizens who will make contributions, and to improve the quality of

life in our community. Aspirantes have been involved in issues such as safety in the school environment. They held a meeting with Newark Police Director, Charles Knox, and were featured on Channel 41 addressing this issue. The Aspira Clubs have created the Aspira Youth Congress which will serve as a coordinating body of students to identify issues that impact on youth and to develop forums and activities to address these issues. The Club representatives in the Aspira Youth Congress will also be involved in a national project funded by the Ford Foundation that will train students to analyze the impact of public policies on communities.

In closing, I want to reiterate that Aspira is determined to maintain the crucial services that are provided for our youth in educational achievement, leadership development and community service. We need all of our supporters to spread the message and assist us in ensuring that Aspira will be able to touch the lives of future generations.



Maria Vizzarrondo-DeSoto
Executive Director
May 1986



Aspira's Executive Director, Ms. Maria Vizzarrondo-De Soto.

Program Report 1986

Introduction

Aspira, Inc. of New Jersey, is a community based, self-help agency whose primary objective is the development of a better educated and more committed community conscious Hispanic youth.

Through educational programs and leadership development training, Aspira tries to break the grim cycle of poverty that entrenches the Puerto Rican and Hispanic Communities.

Since its inception in 1968, Aspira has been working to meet this objective. During its 18 years of existence Aspira has helped thousands of young Hispanics in the Counties of Essex, Passaic and Hudson, through its Health Careers, Business Careers, Talent Search and Leadership Development Programs.

In the year ending June 30, 1986, Aspira served 1,553 students and placed nearly 300 in post-secondary institutions.

The following information will detail the highlights of the 1985-86 program year.

Essex County Center

Aspira's Leadership Development Program continued to teach leadership skills and to help students plan for their future. Aspira counselors, at Barringer Preparatory Jr. High School, Arts High School and Broadway Junior High School, where the program is conducted, got students involved in a wide range of activities to help them stay in school and ensure their progression.

An SAT (Standard Achievement Test) review course was offered to help students better their test taking skills and improve their SAT scores. In addition, bilingual tutorial services were offered in a variety of subject areas for those students in need of these services. Other workshops and training opportunities were offered as well. Students who participated in cultural programs were exposed to campus life via field trips and meetings with college administrators.

In addition, students who were involved with the Aspira Clubs at Barringer Prep, Broadway Junior and Arts High utilized some of the leadership skills they had acquired to get public officials and the media to focus on the safety problem in the schools. Students and Aspira counselors met with school officials and also with Newark's Police Director to discuss the problem. The end result has been the establishment of an on going dialogue between students and officials to periodically review progress in the area.

The Business Careers Program had a great deal of success as it geared students towards careers in Business and Engineering. The annual Business Careers conference attracted over 300 students. Workshops by professionals in their particular business related fields helped students decide what direction to take in pursuing a corporate/high tech career. Also New Jersey Institute of Technology, the host of the conference, had some of their students answer

questions regarding their experiences, as engineering students, at the college level. The conference which was also supported by Bell Communications and Research, served as an excellent recruitment tool as Aspira witnessed a significant number of Aspirantes accepted into NJIT for the fall semester.

A new precedent was set when the Business Careers Program got four Aspira students summer internships with AT&T. This is an effort that Aspira hopes to maintain and expand in the future. In conjunction with the SYETP (Summer Youth Employment Training Program) Aspira employed fourteen students. They were taught clerical skills and also were tutored for at least one hour every day to improve their math and english skills.

The Health Careers Coordinator continues to play a major role as a member of the Minority Admissions Committee at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in advocating on behalf of Hispanic students to ensure entry into the medical school.

Aspira has participated in the Aspira National Health Careers Program for fourteen years and is witnessing the fruits of its labor by the number of doctors and other health professionals who have emerged from this program. A national study cited that Aspira was responsible for the placement of 75% of the Hispanic students who entered medical school nationally.

Passaic County Center

The Aspira Talent Search Program continues to play a major role in drop out prevention and college placement of minority students in Passaic County. It's impressive 14 year track record of service has earned the respect and support of the community at large. Evidence of this support was demonstrated when all segments of the community joined to ensure funds for its continuation after federal cut backs threatened the closing of the center.

Through a wide range of activities Aspirantes in Passaic County were motivated to complete their education and go on to a post-secondary institution.

These activities included the Talent Search Career Conference, sponsored and held at William Paterson College. The keynote speaker for this conference was Mr. Jose Torres, an Aspira alumnus and a businessman in Paterson. Mr. Torres served as an inspiration to the participants. He stressed the importance of succeeding as it relates to self-fulfillment and betterment of the community. The 150 participants from the three counties Aspira serves attended eight workshops in Computer, Health, Education, Theatre, Career Planning, Law, Journalism, and Business. The program concluded with a recruiter fair which gave students the opportunity to converse with representatives from NJ colleges about opportunities at their respective campuses.

Also, Passaic County Community College hosted two very important workshops. One an SAT (Standard Achievement Test) review course, held in October, helped students prepare for standardized examinations. The other, a financial aid form workshop, exposed and assisted students complete their financial aid forms for college.

Trips to Princeton University, Montclair State College, Jersey City State, William Paterson College and New Jersey Institute of Technology, exposed students to college campuses and to the different features and curricula offered. It is noteworthy that 93% of the seniors who participated in the Talent Search Program were placed in college for the Fall.

The Aspira Passaic County Clubs Federation enjoyed its best year ever in 1985. The Federation raised eight \$300 scholarships from local businessmen in Paterson and Passaic. College bound club members were selected, by the Federation, to receive a scholarship according to need, academic achievement, and club participation. This is an example of Aspira's thrust to instill in its students the spirit of self-help and academic excellence.

Hudson County Center

Aspira continued to serve students in Hudson County. The Health Careers Program Counselor worked with students from Ferris High School and Hoboken High School to

get them motivated to finish school and continue at a post secondary institution with a health related field as a possible major.

Aspira's Health Careers counselors, in the counties of Essex and Hudson, organized and implemented the Annual Careers Conference for high school students at Passaic County Community College on March 17th. Ms. Maria Santiago Mercado, a member of the Aspira Board of Directors, gave the keynote address. Panel discussions and a Health Capsule provided the 200 students in attendance with a knowledge of opportunities in the Health field. Aspira thanks Passaic County Community College for co-sponsoring this event.

In addition, the Hudson County Center organized Aspira's Annual Awards Ceremony for graduating seniors, which was sponsored and held at Jersey City State College in Hudson County. Aspira received a proclamation, from Mayor Cuccia of Jersey City, for its great efforts and accomplishments in helping Hispanic and minority students in that county.

Also, in keeping with the spirit of leadership development, the Aspira staff in Hudson County provided students with training and support to ensure strong Aspira Clubs.

During the summer of 1985, Marilyn Rivera from Ferris High School in Jersey City, was one of the Aspirantes selected to participate in a Leadership Development Trip

to Puerto Rico. The trip encouraged students to learn more about Puerto Rican culture and to develop their leadership potential by introducing them to the Island's Officials. The students met the Mayor of San Juan, members of the Puerto Rican Senate and a representative from the Governor's office and were able to study the impact of Puerto Rican policy issues as they relate to Puerto Ricans on the mainland. This activity will be an annual event in cooperation with the Aspira Associates in the other states.



Aspirantes welcoming guests to 9th Annual Luncheon.

Highlights

Report to the Community

The theme of Aspira's 9th Annual Luncheon was "Promoting Access and Excellence." To set the tone of this very important subject, Aspira invited Dr. Sarah Melendez, Associate Director of the Office of Minority Concerns, American Council on Education to give the keynote address. Dr. Melendez, in addressing the 350 guests in attendance, underscored the dangers of the high attrition rate of Hispanic college students on the economy of the country. She emphasized the critical need for Corporate America to involve itself in a plan of action to address this issue, citing the fact that the Hispanic community will become the major pool for the work force of the future. In addition, Fred Ortiz a junior from Hoboken High School and spokesman for the Aspirantes at the event, shared with the audience, the contribution that Aspira had made in his development and urged the guests to continue their support to ensure that other youth can benefit from Aspira's services. During the program Mayor Kenneth Gibson of Newark presented Aspira with a proclamation declaring March 12, 1986 "Aspira Day" in Newark.

Aspira wishes to thank Anheuser Busch for co-sponsoring the Luncheon and to thank all who attended this very successful event.

Youth Congress

The concept of an Aspira Youth Congress was born during a leadership training retreat to the Princeton Educational Center at Blairstown,

N.J. in November. Students were taught strategic planning, club organizing, work plan organizing and leadership principals. In addition, students also learned team building skills by participating in group activities. During the deliberations of that weekend, students determined that there was a need to develop a network by which young people from the different counties could address common concerns and in essence establish a forum to address these issues. While at Blairstown, the students made a commitment to establish a statewide Hispanic student network and thus formed the Aspira Youth Congress of New Jersey.

These students in May, after months of planning, held the First Annual Aspira Youth Congress Conference. This first initiative drew students from the counties of Essex, Passaic, Hudson, Middlesex and Union. New Jersey Congressman Peter J. Rodino was invited to give the keynote address. Ms. Jeanne Habib, a student leader at Rutgers University addressed the audience on the importance of student commitment and involvement in policy issues. The students addressed five areas of concern to them: school regulations, federal aid to students, the high school proficiency test (HSPT), the drop-out problem, and the policies and practices of the Boards of Education. Experts in these areas were invited by the Youth Congress to speak with participants on these issues, in workshops that followed the plenary sessions. The participants took an active role in identifying ways in which these concerns could

be addressed. The conclusions drawn from the conference will be submitted to state and local officials for consideration.

In the years to come, Aspira hopes to expand the network to other counties throughout the state and to provide leadership training to youth in those communities that have not had the benefit of Aspira's programs.

The Aspira Youth Congress has proven a very critical point: Youth do care about the realities of the world around them and that with support and public education they will take an active role as citizens of their communities!

Aspira Clubs
Essex County
Essex Home Club
Barringer High School
Barringer Preparatory Junior High School
Broadway Junior High School
Eastside High School
Our Lady of Good Counsel High School
Boricua Health Organization
Passaic County
Eastside High School
John F. Kennedy High School
Passaic County Clubs Federation
Passaic High School
Hudson County
Ferris High School
Hoboken High School

Aspira Clubs Raising Money:

The Aspira Clubs in the three counties Aspira serves were very active and successful in their fund raising efforts. Through dances, bake sales, candy sales, flower sales, and talent shows, the clubs were able to raise over \$6,000.

The enthusiasm demonstrated by the clubs this year is noteworthy. Special recognition must be given to the Passaic High School Club which staged a talent show entitled "Putting on the Hits" This "standing room only" event drew \$1600 in receipts! The money which the Aspira club members raised was spent in various ways. Scholarships were given to their peers in need, who demonstrated leadership and academic achievement. Activities such as the 1st Aspira Youth Congress Conference were in part sponsored by each club who donated money to the effort.

Through fund raising efforts Aspirantes acquired entrepreneurial skills which will benefit them in the future. Most importantly they are learning the value of sharing the wealth and applying resources in a way that will benefit others as well as themselves. The Aspira clubs must be commended for their outstanding success in fund raising this past year.

Community Involvement:

Aspira maintained a strong presence in community events in 1985.

In July, Aspira celebrated in the state-wide Puerto Rican Day Parade with a float sponsored by AT&T. The Aspira float was designed by the Essex County Student Federation, and won first prize. Close to 200 people clad in Aspira T-shirts marched under the Aspira banner on a day dedicated to the ethnic heritage of Puerto Ricans. In the spirit of cultural tradition and celebration staff from all the Aspira Centers and La Casa De Don

Pedro sponsored a Three Kings Day Festival in January. Aspira staff collected toys for the 200 needy children who attended the festival held at the Community Center of La Casa De Don Pedro. Aspira collected so many toys that a donation of the extra toys was made to the Hispanic Multi Purpose Center in Paterson for their festival.

In addition to the gift giving, the children were lectured on the significance of the holiday (Puerto Rican Christmas) and were entertained by a folkloric group of young children who received a standing ovation from the audience.

All of the contributors to this event must be thanked for making this event a memorable occasion for the needy children of the North Ward community.

During the month of October, the island of Puerto Rico suffered a disaster when mud slides ravaged the Mameyes area. Because of the need for bilingual case workers, United Way turned to Aspira to help in this effort.

Ms. Myriam Ramirez, an Aspira staff member was loaned to the Red Cross to go to the disaster area and supervise 81 volunteers from the Catholic University of Ponce as they attempted to alleviate the suffering. They provided vital services of distributing food and clothing to the victims, supervising interim shelters and assessing the extent of the disaster to see what other services were still needed. The American Red Cross presented an award to Ms. Ramirez for her hard work and dedication. Aspira staff

and students donated money to this effort. We hope that our contribution brought some comfort to the victims of the disaster.

International Focus

Aspira's Executive Director, Maria Vizcarrondo-De Soto was one of 13,000 women from all areas of the world who participated in the Non-Governmental Organizations Forum which preceded the United Nations Women's Decade Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in July. The purpose of the forum was to review and appraise the progress achieved by women, the problems that still exist, and what strategies need to be implemented for women's advancement in this decade.

Ms. Vizcarrondo-De Soto, as a member of the African-American Institute delegation, visited local women's projects. This gave her the chance not only to exchange program models and to discuss common needs, but also to emphasize the importance of women building effective networks to realize the goals for the decade.

It is Ms. Vizcarrondo-De Soto's dream to establish an Aspira exchange program, to expose Aspirantes to international issues and their relevancy to the local communities.

Alumni Dance

On September 20th, with support from Goya, the 1st Annual Aspira Alumni Dance was held at the Quality Inn in Newark. Over 300 Aspira alumni and friends attended

and renewed old associations and started new ones. The dance, the first of what will be an annual event, serves as a way for Aspira to expand the Alumni membership so we can have another source of revenue, establish a mentor-

ship program so alumni can work with Aspira's high school and college students by being role models and providing guidance, and finally so we can solidify a volunteer group to help in fund raising efforts and program areas.



Students readying to rally at Blairstown.



Aspira seniors pledging their future commitment at "Aroyto" ceremony.

Aspira Inc. of New Jersey
Statement of Support, Revenue, Expenses and Changes in Fund Balances
Year Ended June 30, 1986
Financial Highlights

	Current funds		Fixed asset fund	Total all funds
	Unrestricted	Restricted		
Public Support and Revenue				
Support:				
Corporations and foundations	\$ 92,698	\$ 79,664	\$ 3,200	\$175,562
Government grants	—	146,426	—	146,426
Re-grants from Aspira of America, Inc. (Note 7)	—	76,387	—	76,387
Community, including United Way	1,875	38,208	—	40,083
Total support	94,573	340,685	3,200	438,458
Revenue:				
Individuals and fundraising activities	20,950	—	—	20,950
Interest and other	2,953	—	—	2,953
Transfers of administrative overhead	14,467	(14,467)	—	—
Total revenue	38,370	(14,467)	—	23,903
Total public support and revenue	132,943	326,218	3,200	462,461
Expenses				
Program services:				
Health career opportunities	—	72,993	—	72,993
Business career	16,226	58,802	—	75,028
Other career and educational counseling	55,044	197,325	—	252,369
Total program service	71,270	329,120	—	400,390
Supporting services:				
Management and general	63,004	—	9,611	72,615
Fund raising	14,238	—	—	14,238
Total supporting services	77,242	—	9,611	86,853
Total expenses	148,512	329,120	9,611	487,243
Excess (Deficiency) of public support and revenue over expenses	(15,569)	(2,902)	(6,411)	(24,882)
Fund balances, beginning of period	53,764	6,048	11,452	71,264
Adjustment to fund balances (Note 3)	28,172	(2,441)	850	26,581
Fund balances, end of period	\$ 66,367	\$ 705	\$ 5,891	\$ 72,963

Agency Contributors and Community Funds

Aspira of America	Kean College of New Jersey	Paterson Dept. of Community Development
Aspira of New York	La Casa De Don Pedro	Picatinny Arsenal
Bloomfield College	Matchbox Toy Limited	Planned Parenthood of Essex County
Caldwell College	Mount Sinai Medical School	Presidential Classroom for Young Americans
Channel 41 - SIN	National Association of Hispanic Engineers	Princeton Educational Center at Blairstown
Connection Cable Corporation	National Puerto Rican Coalition	Princeton University
Essex County College	Newark Board of Education	Puerto Rican Congress of New Jersey
GMI	Newark Police Department	Rahway State Prison
Hispanic Association of Higher Education	New Jersey Institute of Technology	Rutgers, The State University
Hoboken Board of Education	New Jersey Network	St. Peters College
Hudson County Community College	Our Lady of Good Counsel	Seton Hall University
Inroads	Passaic Board of Education	Smith College
Inter American University of Puerto Rico	Passaic County Community College	Technical Training Project
Jersey City Board of Education	Passaic Dept. of Community Development	United Way of Essex and West Hudson
Jersey City State College	Paterson Board of Education	University of Medicine and Dentistry of N.J.

Aspira Inc. of New Jersey
Statement of Functional Expenses
Year Ended June 30, 1986

Financial Highlights

	Program services				Supporting services			
	Health Career Opportunities	Career Public education	Other Career and educational counseling	Total	Management and general	Fund raising	Total	Total expenses
Salaries	\$59,508	\$40,569	\$148,394	\$248,471	\$19,519	\$ 5,502	\$25,021	\$273,492
Payroll taxes and fringe benefits	9,426	7,690	33,487	50,603	4,341	1,224	5,565	56,168
Total salaries and related costs	68,934	48,259	181,881	299,074	23,860	6,726	30,586	329,660
Program activities, seminars and workshops	649	628	5,039	6,316	2,891	3,254	6,145	12,461
Student scholarships stipends and fellowships	—	4,000	8,600	12,600	—	—	—	12,600
Supplies	379	1,675	3,911	5,965	1,478	164	1,642	7,607
Telephone and postage	182	3,007	8,898	12,087	5,306	621	5,927	18,014
Travel and meetings	—	316	2,966	3,282	3,359	—	3,359	6,641
Professional fees and contractual services	1,100	9,872	19,571	30,543	2,599	—	2,599	33,142
Rent, utilities maintenance	1,012	4,444	15,579	21,035	6,591	732	7,323	28,358
Printing	—	50	251	301	658	1,579	2,237	2,538
Equipment rental	48	1,439	4,788	6,275	5,675	630	6,305	12,580
Insurances	—	—	—	—	4,119	—	4,119	4,119
Subscriptions and advertising	—	—	—	—	—	532	532	532
Contributions	—	—	—	—	1,287	—	1,287	1,287
Other	—	10	—	10	5,181	—	5,181	5,191
Total expenses before depreciation and amortization	72,304	73,700	251,484	397,486	63,004	14,238	77,242	474,730
Depreciation and amortization	689	1,328	885	2,902	9,611	—	9,611	12,513
	\$72,993	\$75,028	\$252,369	\$400,390	\$72,615	\$14,238	\$86,853	\$487,243

Upsala College
William Peterson College
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